

# Full funding for Help America Vote Act needed

With a presidential election only a year away, Congress has an important obligation to keep our democracy strong by ensuring every American's vote is counted. As we all remember, the 2000 presidential election highlighted serious problems that exist in our country's election system. We must not



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allow a repeat of Florida's "hanging chads," citizen disenfranchisement or the need for the U.S. Supreme Court to decide the winner of the presidential election. I want a strong democracy, which is why I support Congress fully funding the Help America Vote Act to make sure every vote counts in every election.

Last fall, Congress responded to the election disaster of 2000 by passing the Help America Vote Act with the overwhelming support of both Democrats and Republicans. This democracy-strengthening bill authorizes federal assistance to state and local governments to help them update voting systems, streamline the voter registration processes and provide poll worker training and voter education. Congress now faces its final opportunity to provide states with the necessary election reform funding before the 2004 presidential election. At present, the bill is seriously under funded by almost \$2 billion and its important reforms will not be realized. We cannot allow

Americans to go to the polls in next year's presidential election unsure of whether their vote will be accurately counted.

Immediate full funding of the Help America Vote Act is essential to enable Minnesota and other states to complete implementation of these important election reforms

and deadlines that are now required under the new law. Minnesota has already received \$5.3 million for election reform and is eligible to receive an additional \$22.5 million over the next three years for counties to improve voting access for disabled persons. We know Minnesota is a national leader in election administration and voter turnout, therefore Minnesota is better positioned than most states to play a leadership role in implementing these important reforms.

With an important presidential election next year, it is crucial that we reaffirm our commitment to voting rights, equality and equal access. Before Congress adjourns later this year, it must appropriate full funding of the election reforms promised to states one year ago. At a time when we are spending billions of dollars to bring democracy to Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. needs to strengthen and invest in our own democratic election process. The future of our democracy is at stake.

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